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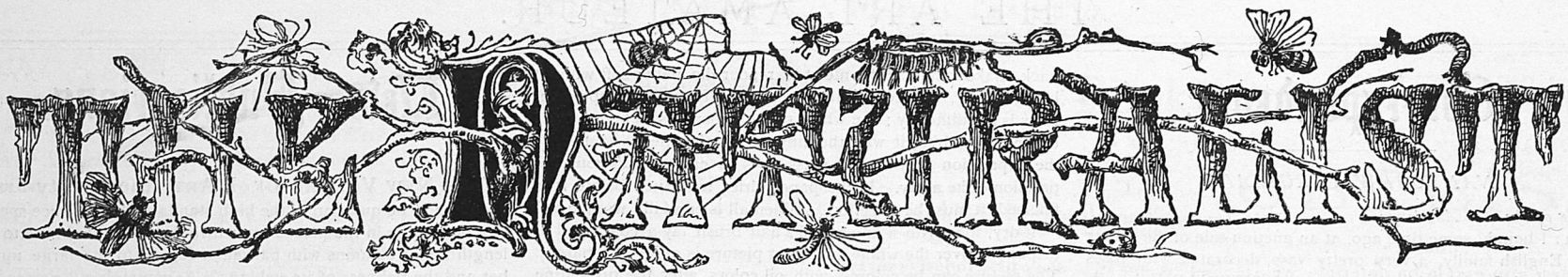
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MOTH-HUNTING.



MATEUR entomologists often look with wonder and envy at the brilliant array of moths in the cabinet of some experienced collector, and wish they could have the luck to come across such specimens. A recent English writer gives some hints on moth-catching which may

be of interest and value to novices on this side of the Atlantic. As moths appear only at night, remarks the writer in question, we must follow them to their haunts, prepared with lantern and net. In the dusk of the evening, just as the sun sets and twilight comes on, we must take our stand near the flowers frequented by certain moths. In spring the cherry and apple blossoms may be watched, and, later on, the flowers of the honeysuckle, petunias, and a host of others. Light is also a great attraction to many moths, some great rarities being captured frequently inside or outside street lamps.

The great nostrum, however, for capturing moths is—"Sugar!" The legend runs that many years ago some one discovered (or imagined) that moths came to an empty sugar cask, thought perhaps that the virtue resided in the barrel, and accordingly carted it off into the woods, and was rewarded by rarities previously unknown. A sage subsequently conceived the idea that the virtue was in the sugar and not in the cask, and then came the idea of an improved "sugar," made as follows:

Coarse brown sugar, 1 lb.
Treachle (or molasses), $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.
Porter (or ale), 1 gill.
Rum, a wineglassful.

Mix together the sugar, treacle, and beer in a saucepan, and bring it to the boiling point, stirring it meanwhile. Put it in corked bottles, and just before you wish to use it add the rum. Aniseed is sometimes used as the flavoring medium. Honey is also substituted for sugar, and sometimes the whole is mixed unboiled.

The entomologist having provided himself with a bottle of the foregoing mixture, a tin pot to pour it into, a brush to lay it on with, a net, one or more killing bottles, and a lantern, is equipped for sugaring. Mild nights in early spring sometimes afford rarities, and certainly many hibernated common species. Warm, cloudy nights, with a little wind stirring, are generally favorable. Moonlight nights are, as a rule, blank ones for the "sugarer." Many nights which appear favorable will, on the contrary, be unaccountably disappointing; not a single moth will make its appearance. The presence of fog, attractive flowers, or a coming change of wind or temperature will sometimes account for this. "Showers, rain, thunder-storms, provided they are accompanied by warmth, are," says Dr. Knaggs, "very favorable, and the catch during these conditions of the atmosphere will generally repay the inconvenience of a wet jacket. On one terrible night, when the lightning was perfectly terrific, almost blinding, even though my companion's eyes and mine were kept open to our work, an incredible profusion of moths of various kinds were hustling one another for a seat at the festive board, and continued thus to employ themselves until a deluge of rain swept both sweets and moths away from their positions. On another stormy night, I well remember, having counted no less than a hundred and fifty moths of several sorts and sizes struggling for the possession of two small patches of sugar. Perhaps the best condition of the air may be described as cloudy overhead but clear, and free from ground-fog near the earth; and when this state of things has been preceded by sultry weather, and a steady west, south, or south-west wind is blowing at the time, the collector need not fear the result, for he can hardly fail to be successful."

August is usually one of the very best months for sugaring, and, if warm, what can be more charming than to select a fine night at this season of the year and

to spend it in the woods? Just before dusk get your sugar painted on the trees, at about the height of your chest, in long narrow strips, taking care not to let any fall at the foot of the tree or among the adjacent bushes (though you may sometimes do very well by sugaring low down near the foot of the tree). Just as the bats begin to fly you will have finished the last tree of your round, and rapidly retracing your steps to the first you will perhaps find some moths, with wings raised, rapidly flitting up and down your patch of sugar. If you are not skilful at "bottling" catch them in the net and transfer to the bottle at your leisure. The best plan is to work two or three large "cyanide bottles" in this manner: Get some bottles with as large mouths as possible—a confectioner's small and strong glass jars are about as good as you can have. To these have corks cut as tightly as possible, sloping outward above the bottle some little distance, to afford a good grip. Charge with cyanide of potassium in the bottom, putting in enough to make the bottles work quickly. When you see one of the insects at your sugar, aim at him stealthily, as it were, with the mouth of your bottle, and when near enough rapidly close the mouth over him—ten to one he flies to the light, and with a little management you may contrive to get the bottle recorked. Let him remain in the bottle until stupefied, meanwhile using another bottle. When this is tenanted and the insect drops, gently shake him into the first bottle, using the last to capture the next insect, and so on. By using three bottles you can always have one disengaged, and the bottled insects can thus be allowed to remain a sufficient time to become dead before pinning.

The reader may ask, how is the necessary lantern held all this time? Between the teeth by a piece of wood or leather fixed round the top or swinging handle, or by being strapped on the chest at the height of the sugar patch. This is, of course, on the assumption that you work alone, but you will find a friend, to hold the lantern or net while you "bottle," not by any means prohibitory to enjoyable collecting. Two working together can get over more ground than one, and what one misses the other stops. From dusk to eleven on a favorable night in the summer months the "fun is fast and furious;" thousands of moths of the common sorts come and go; now and then a "good thing" to sweeten the toil. One of the most curious things about sugaring is the swarming of one species at a certain hour of the night, their almost total disappearance, and their replacement by moths of quite a different genus, giving way again to others; then comes a lull between half-past eleven and one or half-past, then a rush again up to daylight, when they all disappear, save one or two, which remain until they tumble drunk off the tree. Another curious thing is that you may sugar in a wood for years and will always find certain trees unprofitable. You can assign no reason for this, as the unproductive tree may be precisely similar to others on which insects swarm. As a rule, however, rough-barked trees are the best, and smooth, or dead and rotten ones the worst.

PRESERVING AUTUMN LEAVES.

IN Appletons' "Summer Book," a new and delightful volume for the country and the sea-shore, we find some directions for preserving autumn leaves, written by a lady whose success in the preservation of such leaves has given her quite a local reputation. "From my own observation," she says, "I think it a mistaken idea that frosts are needed to brighten and deepen the tints of autumn leaves. 'Leaves have their time to fall' is as certain as any of Nature's marvels, and they do it much more gracefully in the mellowing sunshine, ripening day by day, every day showing new tints and beauties, until they fall, their mission accomplished. To preserve their coloring they should be gathered from the trees *before frosts* (getting all the shades and tints

possible, of course), singly and in sprays suitable for pressing, and at once placed between the leaves—not too near together—of books or newspapers, and several pounds' weight laid upon them. They should be kept, while pressing, in a cool place, and as often as every other day (every day is better during the first week) changed into new books. This is important because the paper absorbs the dampness from the leaves, and they soon become discolored if allowed to remain.

"They should be kept in press until thoroughly dry—between two and three weeks—otherwise they shrivel; they are then ready for a coating of oil or varnish. I find a mixture of three ounces of spirits of turpentine, two ounces of boiled linseed-oil, and half an ounce of white varnish preferable to either alone. Get a perfectly smooth board, large enough to lay a spray upon with no reaching of the leaves beyond the outer edges, or in an unlucky moment comes the wail, 'How could I be so careless as to break off the very loveliest leaf!' I have done it more than once, and have thereby learned that autumn leaves are brittle things and require tender handling. Take a piece of soft cloth to apply the dressing—a brush does not do it as evenly—and there must be no streaks left; they are a blemish when dry.

"After the application the leaves must be laid carefully on boards or papers (not overlapping each other) until dry, and then disposed of as taste suggests, avoiding as much as possible a stiff, unnatural arrangement. They charm me most in sprays and groups on curtains and walls, with or without ferns; but they can be arranged very artistically on the panels of doors, using starch for holding them in place. I have seen them used with evergreens in winter decorations with great effect; the stem can be broken off and a fine wire fastened in its place, which makes them a little more yielding to handle. There is beauty for some in a wreath, so called, of autumn leaves, but I have always failed to see it, more especially if under glass; they have such a helpless, imprisoned look, the beauty all flattened out of them.

"Not long since I read the maledictions of an individual on a newspaper; he had read in it: 'To preserve autumn leaves, put a little white wax on the surface and pass a warm iron over them.' He said he sat up till after midnight ruining a bushel of the loveliest leaves he ever saw; 'it left them the color of an old felt hat.' I have had some experience in the ironing process, and can truthfully say it spoils both leaves and temper.

"The leaves of sumach and the Virginia creeper, or five-fingered ivy, will retain their beauty for a time, if pressed, and can be used to advantage with other leaves; but after drying they have not much substance, and soon 'the grace of the fashion of them perisheth,' as do so many other beautiful things."

IN making an herbarium it is necessary to poison the specimens or the insects will soon find them out, and it will be observed that they show their good taste by feeding solely on juicy, succulent plants, scarcely ever touching the dry ones. The best poison for this purpose consists of one pound each of corrosive sublimate and carbolic acid to four gallons of methylated spirits. The great drawback to the preparation is its disagreeable smell. The plants are simply painted with it after or before fastening down; if it is done before, they require to be pressed while the poison is drying. The best way of preserving the color of flowers is to dry them quickly, either by placing them between sheets of paper, tying them together firmly, and drying them near a hot fire, by laying them among dry sand, or by pressing them with a warm flat-iron. This is an excellent plan, but great care must be taken not to have the iron too hot or the plants will become brittle. No varnishing is requisite in forming an herbarium; if the plants are properly dried and stuck down they look better without it.